



## **NEWS FROM NOAA**

**NATIONAL OCEANIC & ATMOSPHERIC ADMINISTRATION • US DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE**

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Contact: Brian Gorman (NW) - 206-526-6613  
Jim Milbury (CA) – 562-980-4006

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Aug. 12, 2005

### **NOAA ISSUES CRITICAL HABITAT AREAS FOR PACIFIC SALMON IN CALIFORNIA, NORTHWEST**

*Provides incentives for regional Habitat Conservation Plans,  
More focus for recovery efforts*

Reaffirming its commitment to salmon recovery, the NOAA Fisheries Service today released its final critical habitat designation for 19 evolutionarily significant units of salmon and steelhead in California and the Northwest protected under the Endangered Species Act.

“These designations support our extensive salmon recovery efforts and promote important voluntary and collaborative efforts important to protecting salmon,” said Bill Hogarth, NOAA Fisheries Service administrator.

In making the designation, NOAA Fisheries used the latest scientific understanding of salmon habitat and identified more than 31,000 miles of stream and shoreline inhabited by salmon. Of the habitat identified, NOAA designated 89 percent as critical. Designation obligates other federal agencies to give special consideration to their activities when they take place in the designated areas.

The final policy contains exclusions for private landowners in the Northwest who have agreed to voluntary conservation efforts on their land. NOAA hopes to encourage other landowners in the northwest and California to seek voluntary agreements that include protections that outweigh those that are likely through critical habitat designation.

“This Administration believes strongly in providing incentives for private landowners who are already protecting species voluntarily, and these designations recognize their hard work,” said Bob Lohn, head of the NOAA Fisheries Service northwest region. He added that the agency would carefully review and consider for exclusion other voluntary habitat conservation plans submitted in the future, which would conserve salmon species.

“Today’s designations will help the agency refine its recovery efforts for listed fish and will be part of the locally created recovery plans we are completing,” added Lohn. “We have focused very specifically on those areas that

are most important to recovery of salmon and steelhead, allowing us to most efficiently use our resources to protect fish.”

Rod McInnis, Southwest regional administrator, echoed Lohn's remarks. "Today's designation of critical habitat really helps to protect those areas most important for salmon and steelhead restoration in California," he said.

In April, the NOAA Fisheries Service, with local, tribal, and state support, released a draft recovery plan for three ESA-listed Columbia/Snake River species in the Lower Columbia River in Washington. Similar recovery plans for all other regions of the Columbia and Snake River basins are expected to be delivered to the NOAA Fisheries Service by the end of 2005, and incorporated into final recovery plans by the end of 2006. These areas would include plans for recovering the other nine Columbia/Snake River stocks in the Snake River Basin and the upper- and mid-Columbia River, as well as several other salmon species in the Pacific Northwest.

More information including a variety of related maps, documents, and data supporting the proposal can be found at <http://www.nwr.noaa.gov/1salmon/salmesa/crithab/CHsite.htm> for the Northwest and <http://swr.nmfs.noaa.gov> for California.

The NOAA Fisheries Service is dedicated to protecting and preserving our nation's living marine resources and their habitat through scientific research, management and enforcement. The NOAA Fisheries Service provides effective stewardship of these resources for the benefit of the nation, supporting coastal communities that depend upon them, and helping to provide safe and healthy seafood to consumers and recreational opportunities for the American public.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration, an agency of the U.S. Commerce Department, is dedicated to enhancing economic security and national safety through the prediction and research of weather and climate-related events and providing environmental stewardship of our nation's coastal and marine resources. Through the emerging Global Earth Observation System of Systems, NOAA is working with its federal partners and nearly 60 countries to develop a global monitoring network that is as integrated as the planet it observes.

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